POL 14 VIETS

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XR POL 15-1 VIETS

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Saigon 3154 8-15-67

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ACTION EA 19

INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,EUR 25,
IO 21,SAL 01,SP 02,SS 35,GPM 03,SC 01,NSC 10,RSC 01,L 03,H 02,
P 04,INR 07,AID 30,RSR 01,/165 W

P 151130Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 443
AMCONSUL DANANG 738

UNCLAS SAIGON 3154

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF OPENING STATEMENT BY TRAN VAN HUONG AT HIS AUGUST 15 PRESS CONFERNCE:

2. QUOTE IF THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT HAS PROCEEDED NORMALLY, THEN WE WOULD HAVE BEEN PRESENT IN THE PROVINCES TODAY TO MEET THE ELECTORS INSTEAD OF SITTING HERE TALKING TO YOU.

YOU HAVE BEEN INVITE HASTILY. BUT THAT IS BECAUSE SOME ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE. I HOPE YOU WILL UNDERSTAND AND OVERLOOK IT.

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IN THE HIGHER INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY, AND BECAUSE WE DID NOT WANT TO DISAPOINT THE NATION IN ITS HOPE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRULY DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, WE HAVE MADE EVERY EFFORT TOWARDS CONCILIATION AND COMPROMISE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. FOLLOWING THE QUANG TRI INCIDENT.

HOWEVER, IN RECENT DAYS, A NUMBER OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 10/6/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

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HAVE TAKEN PLACE, COMPELLING US TO DELAY OUR TRIO TO CENTRAL VIETNAM ONCE MORE, ALTHOUGH WE KNOW THAT TO DO SO WOULD BE TO DO DAMAGE TO OUR OWN CHANCES CONSIDERABLY, AND ESPECIALLY TO BE GUILTY TOWARDS OUR COMPATRIOTS ELECTORS IN CENTRAL VIET NAM.

WE FEEL VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT IT, BUT WE CANNOT DO OTHERWISE. WE HAVE HELD THIS PRESS CONFERENCE TO PRESENT TO YOU THE FACTS MENTIONED ABOVE, AND TO EXPLAIN OUR POSITION TO THE NATION.

WE THINK THAT CONFIDENCE IS A VERY IMPORTANT THING IN THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY, AND IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR US TO ACCEPT DAMAGES AND REPROACHES THAN TO BE SUSPECTED OF DISLOYALTY TOWARDS THE NATION.

IF AFTER HEARING OUR EXPLANATIONS, YOU SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR UNHAPPINESS, THEN WE ASK YOU TO BE KIND ENOUGH TO CONVEY

TO OUR COMPATRIOTS OF CENTRAL VIETNAM OUR SINCERE APOLOGIES. BECAUSE WE DO NOT HAVE THE SAME MEANS AS THE GOVERNMENT AT OUR DISPOSAL, WE CAN ONLY APPEAL TO THE KINDNESS AND IMPARTIALITY OF THE PRESS.

WE HAVE ENTERED THE ELECTION WITH ALL OUR SINCERITY AND GOOD WILL. WE VIEW THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN AS AN HONEST CONTEST BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES, A BROTHERLY COMPETITION IN THE SPIRIT OF FAIR PLAY BETWEEN NATIONALISTS WHO, WHATEVER THE POLICIES THEY ADVOCATE, SHARE THE SAME AIM OF SERVING TH INTERESTS OF THE NATION. BETWEEN NATIONALISTS, ALL ARE OUR FRIENDS, AND NONE WILL EVER BE CONSIDERED OUR ENEMY.

TO US, WHAT MATTERS IS NOT VICTORY OR DEFEAT. WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE SHOULD ENSURE THAT, THROUGH THE PRESENT ELECTION, THE NATION IS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE MEN WHO, IN THEIR VIEW, HAVE A RECORD OF STRUGGLE FOR THE COUNTRY, ARE HONEST, HAVE GOOD WILL AND COMPETENCE, TO LEAD THE NATION OUT OF THE GRAVE CRISIS BESETTING IT TODAY.

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WE BEGAN OUR CAMPAIGN IN THE SPIRIT MENTIONED ABOVE. BUT WE MUST CONFESS WITH BITTERNESS THAT SUCH WAS NOT THE SPIRIT OF EVERYONE IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, AND ESPECIALLY NOT THAT OF THOSE WHO HOLD POWER AT PRESENT.

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FROM THE QUANG TRI TRIP UNTIL TODAY, WHAT WE HAVE DONE WHAT HAS BEEN THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAS BEEN FULLY RELATED BY THE PRESS: I LEAVE IT TO THE WHOLE NATION TO JUDGE. AS FAR AS I MYSELF AM CONCERNED, I HAVE ONLY ONE REQUEST TO MAKE OF THE GOVERNMENT: THAT IT SHOULD RESERVE TO US, CIVILIAN CANDIDATES, A MINIMUM DEGREE OF COURTESY, ESPECIALLY AS WE HAVE NEVER BEEN IMPOLITE TOWARDS THE GOVERNMENT SO FAR.

I MADE THAT REQUEST BECAUSE WHEN SEVEN PRESIDENTIAL TICKETS SENT A JOINT LETTER TO THE TWO HIGHEST MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT BUT RECEIVED NO DIRRECT REPLY, THEN WHAT HOPE IS THERE THAT THE VOICE OF THE COMMON MAN WILL EVER BE HEARD BY THE GOVERNMENT.

BUT THAT BELONGS TO THE PAST. AND HERE IS THE NEW DEVELOPMENT: IN RECENT DAYS, THE CAMPAIGNERS FOR OUR TICKET HAVE BEEN THE VICTIMS OF HEAVY PRESSURES AND INTIMIDATIONS IN THE PROVINCES. I HAVE HAD OCCASION TO TOUCH UPONTHIS WHEN TALKING TO THE PRESS.

MR. MAI THO TRUYEN WILL TELL YOU ABOUT A NUMBER OF THINGS WHICH HAVEHAPPENED TO THE CAMPAIGNERS FOR OUR TICKET

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INTHE PROVINCES.

IN ADDITION, A NUMBER OF OUR ELECTORAL AGENTS WILL PERSONALLY GIVE YOU SPECIFIC FACTS PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF PRESSURES AN INTIMIDATIONS FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. THEY ARE ALL YOUNG. THEY STILL HAVE A LONG FUTURE AHEAD OF THEM.

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AND THEY LIVE IN THE PROVINCES. THEY REALIZE THAT TO SPEAK UP MEANS TO RISK GRAVE DANGERS. BUT THEY CONSIDER THAT IT IS THEIR DUTY TO SPEAK UP, BECAUSE THEY ARE DEEPLY ATTACHED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRUE DEMOCRACY IN THIS COUNTRY. END QUOTE

3. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF SECOND STATEMENT BY TRAN VAN HUONG AT HIS AUGUST 15 PRESS CONFERENCE AS IT APPEARED IN HANDOUT (HE EXPANDED THESE REMARKS CONSIDERABLY IN READING THEM):

4. QUOTE FACED WITH THSE PAINFUL FACTS, OUR TICKET DEEMS IT NECESSARY TO PLACE WITNESSES BEFORE YOU, FOLLOWING THE DENIALS BY THE AUTHORITIES IN THEIR STATEMENTS RECENTLY.

WE THINK THAT WHEN THE PEOPLE IN POWER CONTINUE TO APPLY INTIMIDATORY METHODS, AND TO PUT PRESSURE THOUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ON THE ELECTORS AND ON THE CAMPAIGNERS FOR THE CIVILIAN TICKETS THEN OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY BECOMES IN FACT INEFFECTIVE, AND THERE IS NOT THE SLIGHTEST HOPE

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THAT THE DIRECT DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PEOPLE AND THE FUTURE GOVDRNMENT CAN MATERIALIZE.

I FEAR THAT, IF NOT BROUGHT TO AN END VERY SOON, THE ABOVE SITUATION MAY DISCOURAGE THOSE CANDIDATESWHO HAVE DISPLAYED GOOD WILL IN CONTINUING TO CAMPAIGN UNTIL THERE IS A FAIR AND HONEST ELECION. THEN MANY UNEXPECTED REACTIONS MAY TAKE PLACE, AND THE PEOPLE WILL NOT KNOW WHERE TO LOOK FOR A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WHICH IS HONEST AND STRONG, CAPABLE OF PULLING THIS COUNTRY OUT OF THE SUFFERINGSS AND HARDSHIPS IT IS UNDERGOING TODAY.

AS FAR AS MY TICKET IS CONCERNED, IF THIS WARNING DOES NOT LEAD TO ANY CONCRETE ACTION, WE SHALL BE COMPELLED TO RECONSIDER OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTION. END QUOTE

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